חרותינו

Ḥerûṯênû, Our LIBERATION

Issue One, December 2005 /January 2006

An Ebionite Magazine!

Why "Our Liberation"?

The restoration of the Ebionite Movement began in 1985, and in 1995 we began getting out information on the Internet. But now we turn to another tried and true technology—paper in order to reach those offline; the ultimate portable medium. We call this publication *Our Liberation,* in Hebrew, *Ḥerûtênû,* for a number of reasons.

Jews strongly relate to the Passover. The Passover is sometimes referred to as the *time of our freedom* (*Zᵉmān Ḥerûtênû*), or liberation. *Liberation* does not point to being freed from Mitsrayim (ancient Egypt), from the house of slaves. Such a release from slavery would be translated from the word (*ḥôpēš*). Forms of this word are used for the idea of being emancipated, to be released from confinement, or obligation and is the word used in the Exodus story.

But what is liberty? Ebionites are not free to do whatever seems good to us, however we please. For all Yahwistic people there is a moral dimension to liberty. For us, Torah (the written commandments of God) provides a system of equality and justice and it is the only basis of real liberty. In Yahwism we are free to choose in a state of free will, and this is why God redeems us. There are four promises that God made to us concerning the exodus from Egypt and redemption.

He says, " I will take you out from under the burdens of Egypt." And "I will save you from slavery." He also tells us, "I will redeem you with an outstretched arm." But for what? "And I will take you to be my people and I will be your God." In other words, yes, we were emancipated from gentiles so we could be brought to a place to choose liberty in covenant with our God as His people.

By choosing to live in covenant, we are free from all other religious systems, philosophies, paganism, idols, other men, and every conceivable thing they can devise to compete with God or oppress us as the Egyptians did. Only when we first break from the ways of those who do not know God will we clearly see the choice before us as the People who freely choose God. This is the freedom Ebionites have chosen, and this magazine is a message of liberation and the expression of our freedom in covenant with the God of Israel. So we call it *Our Liberation.*

We sincerely pray that this effort will inform you and help you and others to a liberated, corrected world, and world to come.

"Behold, he struck the rock, so that waters gushed out, and streams overflowed; Can He give bread also? Will He provide meat for His people?" (Tehillim 78:20) He does and will!

The Ebionite Manifesto

The Ebionite Community is the living continuation of the Jewish religious movement of Jesus. Christianity is the religion of Paul and others, and not part of the biblical faith and revelation of the God of Israel nor is it of Jesus (Yeshua).

We declare the man Paul of Tarsus, the false teacher against the mark of Covenant and God's Torah, to be outside of the Way taught by Yeshua, the anointed, son of Miryam and Yosef.

Let his name, Paul, be accursed as he called God's Torah a curse. Let the afflictions he incited the gentiles to heap upon God's name and upon His People strike such great shame upon the gentiles that decent people among them will seek God in repentance from the man of Tarsus' Great Sin. Let the frontlets of their eyes and arm be bound with God's Torah and resist the mark of lawlessness.

We call upon the gentiles to repent, to abandon paganism and the perverse testament, and enter into true covenant through Torah, circumcision, and immersion in order to submit and prepare for the Reign of God as brothers exhibiting good works.

Your teachers, popes, ministers, priests, and leaders lead you to the outer darkness. They lie to you, rob you, abuse you, and use you to do likewise to others as they consume the whole world. They are idolaters who feed at Mammon's breast and have built the empire of Edom for two thousand years.

We expose your "apostle" as false; your "testament" as false; your society as false; your church, its rulers, your governments as false. Our allegiance and hope is to the God of Israel alone.

Yahwism, the faith of the Written Torah given by the One God, is a revolutionary system of life with justice that can supercede all other systems of government and ideologies. The Evyonim are Yahwists above all else. It allows for One Ruler, the God of Israel alone, with none beside Him. God is not man, and no man is divine. No man can make you right with God except yourself, and only you can atone for your sins through repentance and reparation to Him and your fellow man. You will never find God, Yahweh King of the Universe, world within worlds, worlds without end, in a church or shrine, kneeling before statues, sticks, stones, or men. Tear down your church and masjid. Take the wood and stones and build houses for the poor; take the sticks for firewood; sell the treasure and idols to buy food and heal the sick; bring all men in love to bend the knee to the God of Israel. **Yahweh Alone**.

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Calendar

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December 2005/January 2006

Readings for Shabbat, December 2005 through January 2006

Week	Parasha	Haftara	Tehillim*
Nov. 27 -Dec. 3, 2005	Toldot: Gen. 25.19-28.9	Malachi 1.1-2.7	16-18
Dec. 4 -10, 2005	Wayyetze: Gen. 28.10-32.3	Hosea 12.13-14.10 (Optional addition: Micah 7.18) (S'fardi ritual: Hosea 11.7-12.12)	19-22
Dec. 11 -17, 2005	Wayyishlah: Gen. 32.4-36.43	Obadiah 1.1-21 (Optional substitution: Hosea 11.7-12.12)	23-26
Dec. 18 -24, 2005	Wayyeshev: Gen. 37.1-40.23	Amos 2.6-3.8	27-29
Dec. 25 -30, 2005	Mikeitz: Gen. 41.1-44.17	I Kings 3.15-4.1	30-33
Jan. 1 - 7, 2006	Wayyigash: Gen. 44.18-47.27	Ezekiel 37.15-28	34-37
Jan. 8 - 14, 2006	Wayyehi: Gen. 47.28-50.26	I Kings 2.1-12	38-41
Jan. 15 - 21, 2006	Shemot: Exo. 1.1-6.1	Isaiah 27.6-28.13, 29.22-23 (S'fardi ritual: Jeremiah 1.1-2.3).	42
Jan. 22 - 28, 2006	Wa'era: Exo. 6.2-9.35	Ezekiel 28.25-29.21	43-45
Jan. 29 -Feb. 4, 2006	Bo': Exo. 10.1-13.16	Jeremiah 46.13-28	46-48

*These Psalms are suggestions only. Traditionally Psalms read for weekdays are: S/ 24; M/ 48; T/ 82; W/ 94; Tr/ 81; F/ 93; Sh/ 92. For other information see, *Reading the Bible*, in this issue.

Expected New Moon (Rosh Ḥodesh) Days

From Jerusalem

Saturday evening, December 3, 2005
Sunday evening, January 1, 2006
Monday evening, January 30, 2006

Special Days

Ḥanukka, Feast of Rededication/ Lights
Monday, December 26, 2005 -Monday, January 2, 2006

Ebionites: The Essentials

The term *ebionite* [eh-bee-oh-NITE] is an Anglicization of Hebrew, *ʾeḇyônîm* [ehv-yoh-NEEM], a plural word meaning, "poor ones, the poor" but in a religious-social context, the powerless, oppressed, humbled persons, coming from Hebrew *ʾeḇyôn*. In the context of Yeshua of Nazaret and the followers of his reform movement in the early Common Era (CE), that is, from about 3784, these followers were later referred to as Ebionites by the devotees of the Christian mystery cult founded by Paul of Tarsus.

Born a hundred years after Yeshua's death and far from the land of the Jews, the Christian bishop Irenaeus of Lyon wrote *Adversus haereses* (ca. 180). These are comments he makes concerning the Ebionites:

> "Those who are called Ebionites agree that the world was made by God; but their opinions with respect to the Lord are similar to those of Cerinthus and Carpocrates. They use the Gospel according to Matthew only, and repudiate the Apostle Paul, maintaining that he was an apostate from the law. As to the prophetical writings, they endeavor to expound them in a somewhat singular manner: they practice circumcision, persevere in the observance of those customs which are enjoined by the law, and are so Judaic in their style of life, that they even adore Jerusalem as if it were the house of God." (1.26)

There are other Christian descriptions of the Evyonim, but most are simply echoes, and eventually slanders. The most slanderous and uninformed plagiarist was Epiphanius who wrote after 370 CE. (His *Panarion* is the source used by one modern author presenting the "ebionites" as ancient vegetarian hippies.)

To understand the ancient Ebionites one must reject the Christian prism which distorts Jewish and biblical concepts into unrecognizable gentile parodies. When the movement of Yeshua left his Jewish brothers and Jewish soil, severed from biblical faith, it died and was resurrected as a monstrosity by men like Paul of Tarsus. There was never in history a Yeshuine movement made up of gentiles, other than those who converted to Yahwism, embracing the Torah of Israel in the way Irenaeus correctly describes as the Ebionite Yeshuine way. So while Christian *heresiologists* condemned Ebionites as bad Christians, the fact is that the Ebionites were in no wise Christian at all, but Jews like Yeshua. For Christians, this was evidence against the claims of Christianity by actual followers of Yeshua who exposed the conspiracy of Paul and others who proclaimed a god revealed to them in a hallucination, vision, or psychotic episode.

The Evyonim were Jews, one of many types extant in that day, holding to the Torah according to Yeshuine teaching and example. Yeshua said that he was sent to Jews. The Christians dispensed with Judaic ways and Torah. Paul of Tarsus, the founder and theologian of the gentiles' cosmic Christ as a salvation god in his own right was rejected by the followers of Yeshua as an apostate, or worse. From elsewhere we learn that the Evyonim acknowledged Yeshua as a man, the son of Yosef and Miryam, not of divine or supernatural origin, justified by his dedication to God and devotion to the Yahwistic ethics of his nation rather than being a new god who ended the reign of an old god. Their rite of initiation was repentance to God and immersion, and not communion based on symbols of a gentile blood cult.

In future articles we will explore fundamental topics and sources that reveal the Ebionites as the followers of a Jewish man seeking the Reign of God alone in compassion, in holy spirit, as an alternative for the entire world ruled by false and selfish traditions, customs, and laws under selfish egomaniacal men.

Today we are reviving this ancient Jewish sect, this Yeshuine movement, as a means of improving human life and the world, with the guidance of God's commandments. Many of us are former Christians who have been liberated by God—indeed, we are now truly "saved" from a false system of faith—to live a better way. We are "completed Christians" who now embrace the faith of Israel. Some of us are of the "crypto-Jews" whose ancestors were forced to convert to Christianity in order to save their lives and families who now after centuries are returning to God. Others are Jews, including those seduced by "Messianic" Christian groups who have discovered that messianics are not "completed Jews" but apostate Jews who have misunderstood Yeshua.

Ebionites are concerned with the real world rather than myths and superstitions, and real people who deserve no more and no less value than another. We see creation as a system in which the Torah assigns us our place as stewards and beneficiaries rather than destroyers and insatiable consumers. We are revolutionaries without seeking violence but not pacifists. We want to correct this world to its original purpose, a paradise where man lives in peace with God and man.

From the book *Jesus without Idolatry*, by Shemayah Phillips

Yeshua, Yahḥanan, the Reign, Repentance, and Immersion

Mt 3.1 Now, in those days, came Yahḥanan the Immerser, proclaiming in the wilderness of Y'hudah;
2 saying, Repent ye,—for the Reign of the heavens hath drawn near.
…
4 But Yahḥanan, himself, had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins,—while, his food, was locusts and wild honey.
5 Then, were going forth unto him—Yerushalayim, and all Y'hudah, and all the country round about the Yarden:
6 and were being immersed in the Yarden river, by him, openly confessing their sins.
7 But, seeing, many of the "Pious" and Sadducees, coming unto his immersion, he said to them,—Broods of vipers! who suggested to you, to be fleeing from the coming wrath?
8 Bring forth, therefore, fruit worthy of repentance;
9 and think not to be saying within yourselves,—As our father, we have, Abraham; for, I say unto you, that God is able, out of these stones, to raise up children unto Abraham.

Lu 3.10 And the multitude began to question him saying—What, then, shall we do?
11 And, answering, he said unto them—He that hath two tunics, let him share with him that hath none, and, he that hath food, in like manner, let him be doing.
12 And there came, even tax-collectors, to be immersed; and they said unto him—Teacher! what, shall we, do?
13 And, he, said unto them, Nothing more than what is appointed you, exact ye.
14 Then were questioning him, soldiers also, saying—What shall, even we, do? And he said unto them—Molest ye, no one, neither accuse falsely; and be content with your supplies.

(Translation based on Rotherham)

Teaching and Notes

Parallels: 3.1-12 // Mk 1.3-8 // Lu 3.2-17 // Jo 1.6-8, 19-28. [1-2 Q2; 7-9 Q1]

Notes:
3.2- Mt 4.17; Dn 2.44, 4.17; Mt 10.7. 3.4- 2Ki 1.8; Zk 13.4; Lev 11.22. 3.7- Mt 12.34; 23.33; 1The 1.10. 3.9- Jn 8.33; Ro 4.16. 3.10- Mt 7.19

(1) Josephus, *Ant.* 18,5.2
(2) reform; return (to 'Covenant' religion; Mal 3.6,7;4.4,5.). (7) Gr = Pharisaion, "Pharisees"; Saddoukaion (9) sons = Heb, *banim*; stones = *abanim*. *STov* "his son Avraham from these stones" .בנו אברהם מן האבנים האלה; *m.Yoma* 3.8; 8.9; *Meg* 2.4; *Parah* 8.10; *Mikwaot* 1.1-8; 5.5

Omitted above- Mt 3.3

> For this is he whom the Nabi' Y^{e}sha'yah spoke of when he said,
> 'A voice is crying out in the desert
> 'Make clear the way of Yahweh!

'Make his paths straight!' *-Is 40.3*

This cited passage uses the quote from the prophet Isaiah (*Yesha`yah*) in order to build a prophetic setting. Mark takes snippets from both Malachi and Isaiah to create one. As usual for the Christian writings, the passage is taken out of context. The song is about the return of the captives from Babylon. Mark paints Yahḥanan as Eliyah preparing for the new era, and Christianity understands this era as based on salvific work of Jesus, and that Jesus is the "Lord" for whom the way is being cleared. But the meaning of Isaiah 40 negates this.

1 Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. 2 Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem; and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she hath received of [YHWH]'s hand double for all her sins. (Rt)

We see that verses preceding Is. 40.3 say that whatever trepasses Israel (Judah) is guilty of have been *pardoned*, and the exile in Babylon has *more than paid the price of sin*. And this biblical understanding of sin and repentance on the part of both Yahḥanan and afterward Yeshua is definitely drawn from the moral prophets: sin, consequence, repentence (/reparation), and forgiveness. Nobody is longing for a future savior from sin in this passage from Isaiah. In fact, Yeshua and Yahḥanan both explicitly taught a message of biblical repentance (a return to Torah) in preparation for the Reign of God, and the original gospel of Yeshua was:

Mt 4.17 From that time Yeshua began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is imminent.
Mr 1.15 And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.

Must we labor the point that no other gospel (good message, anouncement) was taught—nothing about Yeshua's status, an atonement, or a gospel of his death, burial, and resurrection from the dead—and that any other gospel claims and the doctrines found in Christianity came later?

The Kingdom of God and Repentence

What did Yeshua mean when he spoke of the kingdom, or better translated, *Reign* of God, and why is repentance so integral to it?

The Reign of God was an ideal nation under the Torah as covenant or restoration to that covenant (a *renewing* of that covenant, not a *new* covenant). Yet *kingdom* does not totally avoid the ideal, because there is a terrestrial aspect to covenant in the Land given to those participating in the covenant. Today we think too often of religion in spiritual terms. For ancient Hebrews the covenant was in every sense a social contract that leased the Land to them from its Owner.

Le 25.23 The land shall not be sold beyond recovery, indeed, the Land is Mine—I regard you as aliens and tenants.

The Torah contract stipulated justice and equality between the sons of Israel. It set up a Land where people were told how to worship and not to worship God, how to treat each other with love, respect, and equality, and even how to treat the land and its produce. The only way to illustrate this fully would be to include the entire Torah here and comment to make the points. So we will make reference occasionally instead.

This covenant is eternal (De 7.9), and even when Israel failed to observe it, the covenant did not change, yet God would always take a repentant Israel back. Even in the passage where Christians take license to throw away Israel's covenant for a new one, the scripture corrects this erroneous view. In a future age, when both Judah and Israel (the Northern tribes) are rejoined—something that was unfulfilled in the days of Yeshua, as it is even today—the prophet Jeremiah (*Yirmeyah*) says some important things about God's covenant with His People:

Jer. 31.31 Behold, the days come, saith [YHWH], that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; 32 not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; forasmuch as they broke My covenant, **although I was a lord** [*ba`al*, owner, husband] **over them**, saith [YHWH]. 33 But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith [YHWH], I will put My law [*torati*, my Torah] in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people; 34 and they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying: 'Know [YHWH]'; for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith [YHWH]; for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more.

35 Thus saith [YHWH], Who giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, who stirreth up the sea, that the waves thereof roar, [YHWH] of hosts is His name: 36 If these ordinances depart from before Me, saith [YHWH], then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before Me for ever. 37 Thus saith [YHWH]: If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, then will I also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith [YHWH].

This passage does not support the Christian "new" covenant; it destroys the theological basis of it!

Yirmeyah gives this prophecy in a time when the covenant with God was definitely being disregarded by His People. Strangely, the Christian writing *Hebrews*, by changing the words of book of Jeremiah, twists the passage to make it seem that Jews are no longer chosen and that the covenant was defective:

7 For if that first *covenant* had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. 8 For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: 9 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, **and I regarded them not**, saith the Lord.

As we have seen above, Jeremiah does not say that! Although the age Yirmeyah speaks of has not come to pass (Judah and Israel are not restored), the Christian author of *Hebrews* declares all the things in the prophecy of Yirmeyah is fulfilled! Thus he claims, with the fulfillment of that prophecy, that all mankind has the Torah written upon their hearts without need of direction, and because they know the Torah and live accordingly, and that the least to the greatest of mankind is forgiven of all their sins (rejecting the Christian doctrine of atonement for repentance instead!). And in spite of the actual words of Jeremiah, he insinuates that God's people, who God will always maintain— in the same way as He does the sun, moon, stars and seas—has now been replaced by Christians. If this is not preposterous enough, the Christian author falsifies the biblical text by replacing, "forasmuch as they broke My covenant, **although I was a lord** [or *husband*] **over them,**" with, "**and I regarded them not**"! Why does the Christian replace the word of God with a lie?

But just as the sons of Israel and their seed will never be "cast off" by Yahweh (see above, vss. 35-7), the covenant and Torah are eternal. Only our relationship we choose to maintain with God through His Torah covenant can change. That Covenant is not defective, but in disobedience we are, and Yirmeyah speaks of the remedy to our defect as being Torah, which we humans will someday internalize as part of our psychological makeup.

Jer 29.29 (29-28) The secret things belong unto YHWH our God; but the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.

Deu 30.1 And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt bethink thyself among all the nations, whither YHWH thy God hath driven thee, 2 and shalt return unto YHWH thy God, and hearken to His voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul; 3

that then YHWH thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the peoples, whither YHWH thy God hath scattered thee.

4 If any of thine that are dispersed be in the uttermost parts of heaven, from thence will YHWH thy God gather thee, and from thence will He fetch thee. 5 And YHWH thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and He will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers. 6 And YHWH thy God will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love YHWH thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.

7 And YHWH thy God will put all these curses upon thine enemies, and on them that hate thee, that persecuted thee.

8 And thou shalt return and hearken to the voice of YHWH, and do all His commandments which I command thee this day. 9 And YHWH thy God will make thee over-abundant in all the work of thy hand, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy land, for good; for YHWH will again rejoice over thee for good, as He rejoiced over thy fathers; 10 if thou shalt hearken to the voice of YHWH thy God, to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this book of the law; if thou turn unto YHWH thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul.

This is part of our covenant with God from the beginning and forever, and whenever we repent and renew our commitment to it he will save and restore us; and not only this, but God will punish gentiles for hating us and persecuting us. This is so much different from the gentile story they would have us believe instead of God.

Also, in a prophesy parallel to Yirmeyah, Yeḥizq'el (*Ezekiel*) tells us that although His People have committed a great sin in that they, "have not walked in my statutes, neither executed my judgments, but have done after the manners of the heathen that *are* round about you," Yahweh says of those who will repent:

16 Therefore say, Thus saith Adonay YHWH; Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come. 17 Therefore say, Thus saith the Adonay YHWH; I will even gather you from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel. 18 And they shall come thither, and they shall take away all the detestable things thereof and all the abominations thereof from thence. 19 And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh: 20 That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

-Eze 11.12, 16-20

The *sin* is *living like gentiles* without Torah, who eat unclean things, who charge interest, who have sex with their own gender, celebrate Christmas, Easter, and other pagan holidays celebrating signs in the heavens, who worship men, and all the things they do in disregard of the commandments of God. But those who continued living like the gentiles (after their "detestable things and abominations") would receive further punishment (Eze 11.21). When Yeshua spoke of *kingdom* (actually, *reign*), he meant a utopian, covenant society ruled by God's laws, under a king who would be like David.

My servant David shall be king over them, and they will have one shepherd. They will follow my laws and be careful to keep my decrees.

-Eze 37.24

Throughout this book we shall see Yeshua's concern for Torah justice in a time when it had once again suffered from those who had lost sight of the goal, and how he called for repentance to a system of Torah equity in a program of social reform.

Repentence, ritual and spiritual purification

Ebionites are concerned with purification, but more so spiritual purification regarding repentance and conversion as well as daily purity and general cleanliness.

Bathing was a method of removing ritual defilement as contagion. The defilement is concrete, and specific rather than abstract.

> [16]And if the flow of seed go out from a man, then he shall bathe all his flesh in water, and be unclean until the even. [17]And every garment, and every skin, whereon is the flow of seed, shall be washed with water, and be unclean until the even. [18]The woman also with whom a man shall lie carnally, they shall both bathe themselves in water, and be unclean until the even.
>
> [19]And if a woman have an issue, and her issue in her flesh be blood, she shall be in her impurity seven days; and whosoever toucheth her shall be unclean until the even. [20]And every thing that she lieth upon in her impurity shall be unclean; every thing also that she sitteth upon shall be unclean. [21]And whosoever toucheth her bed shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even. [22]And whosoever toucheth any thing that she sitteth upon shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even.
>
> *—Lev 15*
>
> And every soul that eateth that which dieth of itself, or that which is torn of beasts, whether he be home-born or a stranger, he shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even; then shall he be clean.
>
> *—Lev 17.15*
>
> [4]What man soever of the seed of Aaron is a leper, or hath an issue, he shall not eat of the holy things, until he be clean. And whoso toucheth any one that is unclean by the dead; or from whomsoever the flow of seed goeth out; [5]or whosoever toucheth any swarming thing, whereby he may be made unclean, or a man of whom he may take uncleanness, whatsoever uncleanness he hath; [6]the soul that toucheth any such shall be unclean until the even, and shall not eat of the holy things, unless he bathe his flesh in water.
>
> *—Lev 22*

Defilement is specific to the Sanctuary (and later the Temple), its precincts, and environs. Defilement disqualified persons from worship there.

Ritual bathing for the public has recently been shown conclusive by archaeology. What appears to be *miqwa'ot* have been found at Qumran, and since the 1960s archaeologists have conjectured about the Pool of Siloam (Shiloah) in Jerusalem. In 2004 archaeologists have concluded they have found Siloam and that it was built for the large numbers of Jews immersing themselves in its pure waters from the spring of Silwan before entering the Temple precincts ("Canal where 'Jesus gave sight' found." Lefkovits, Jerusalem Post, Online Edition. Dec. 23, 2004/ Dec. 24). Most affluent residences located in the Upper City had their own ritual baths, and some with additional bathing rooms duirng the Second Temple period (Avigad, 1980. pp. 139-141). But it has not been shown that synagogues as structures existed where a *miqweh* (or, *mikveh*) might be provided. At this time *synagogue* most likely referred to a local *gathering* of a group or community coinciding with the offerings made at the Temple. Water for immersion of groups far from the Temple was probably sought in rivers and other sources, but only on the assumption (based on *miqwa'ot* excavated at Qumran and Masada) that ritual immersion was performed away from the environs of the Temple.

Bodies of living water not prone to stagnation were used. In Talmud tractate *Parah*, the Jordan is listed as one of the places *unfit* for immersion. Parts of the river run slowly, and it is not wide. This does not mean that immersion in the Jordan did not take place.

We accept the practice of immersion (*t'vilah*) in living water (*mayim ḥayim*). Immersion is a requirement for males, in addition to circumcision or *hatafat dam b'rit* (drawing a drop of blood from an existing circumcision), and females for entering the community of 'Evyonim. Immersion is utilized afterward to remove defilement as that state is described in the Torah. Since buildings to house meetings have not been an Ebionite goal, and a *miqweh* is a separate component from a synagogue, running/

living water is the preferred method of purification as well as more convenient. *Miqwa'ot* facilities are permissible to us if they are made available.

We believe that t'vilah was the Ebionite rite of joining our sect, and that what Christians call communion or eucharist was not of Yeshuine origin, but borrowed from mystery cults. This is hinted at in Irenaeus' Adversus Haereses 5.1.3:

> Vain also are the Ebionites, who do not receive by faith into their soul the union of God and man, but who remain in the old leaven of [the natural] birth, and who do not choose to understand that the Holy Ghost came upon Mary, and the power of the Most High did overshadow her: wherefore also what was generated is a holy thing, and the Son of the Most High God the Father of all, who effected the incarnation of this being, and showed forth a new [kind of] generation; that as by the former generation we inherited death, so by this new generation we might inherit life. Therefore do *these men reject the commixture of the heavenly wine, and wish it to be* ***water of the world*** *only, not receiving God so as to have union with Him*, but they remain in that Adam who had been conquered and was expelled from Paradise: not considering that as, at the beginning of our formation in Adam, that breath of life which proceeded from God, having been united to what had been fashioned, animated the man, and manifested him as a being endowed with reason; so also, in [the times of] the end, the Word of the Father and the Spirit of God, having become united with the ancient substance of Adam's formation, rendered man living and perfect, receptive of the perfect Father, in order that as in the natural [Adam] we all were dead, so in the spiritual we may all be made alive. For never at any time did Adam escape the harms of God, to whom the Father speaking, said, "Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness." And for this reason in the last times (fine), not by the will of the flesh, nor by the will of man, but by the good pleasure of the Father, His hands formed a living man, in order that Adam might be created [again] after the image and likeness of God. [*Emphasis mine.*]

Irenaeus has a big problem here with the Ebionite rejection of the Eucharist celebrated by Christians; they did not (and do not) practice this remnant of mystery religion at all. As Jews they celebrated Passover instead, without the gentile innovation paganizing Passover as a communion by imbibing the flesh and blood a god! Later heresiologists after Irenaeus claimed that the Ebionites did keep a Eucharistic meal—but celebrated with bread and water, as well as later scholars and sensationalists (like vegetarian proponent Keith Akers) promote this still. But Irenaeus is criticizing the Ebionite rejection of the idea of God coming in the flesh, like the "commixture of heavenly wine" which until a few centuries ago Christians taught and brutally imposed the belief that the wine of the eucharist was the actual blood of their Christ (in the doctrine of *transubstantiation*). This was the way Christians join themselves to, and literally partake of their Christ. The plain old "water of the world" (sola aqua secularis) refers to the Ebionites' practice of immersion. It does not refer to water as a sacrament as misunderstood by others. It recalls the Ebionite belief that holy spirit filled Yeshua at his immersion (*GE* /Epiphanius, *Panarion* 3.13.7ff), a belief the Christian heresiologists also criticized. Such a belief totally undermines the idea that Yeshua was more than a man, divine, but supports the Ebionite belief that he himself had to persevere, was capable of failure, and was accountable, under authority of God and in need of His help, as all men are. In other words, Yeshua had to earn his place as a righteous man. The entire idea of Eucharistic meals serving a sacrificial god or man, symbolic or literal, is foreign, pagan, and outrageous. The Ebionite immersion is expressed by that immersion observed by Yahḥanan and experienced by Yeshua.

Josephus speaks of Yahḥanan's immersion:

> Now some of the Jews thought that the destruction of Herod's army came from God, and that very justly, as a punishment of what he did against John, that was called the Baptist: for Herod slew him, who was a good man, and commanded the Jews to exercise virtue, both as to righteousness towards one another, and piety towards God, and so to come to baptism; for that the washing [with water] would be acceptable to him, if they made use of it, not in order to the putting away [or the remission] of some sins [only], but for the purification of the body; supposing still that the soul was thoroughly purified beforehand by righteousness. Now when [many] others came in crowds about him, for they were very greatly moved [or pleased] by hearing his words, Herod, who feared lest the great influence John had over the people might put it into his power and inclination to raise a rebellion, (for they seemed ready to do any thing he should advise,) thought it best, by putting him to death, to prevent any mischief he might cause, and not bring himself into difficulties, by sparing a man who might make him repent of it when it would be too late. Accordingly he was sent a prisoner, out of

> Herod's suspicious temper, to Macherus, the castle I before mentioned, and was there put to death. Now the Jews had an opinion that the destruction of this army was sent as a punishment upon Herod, and a mark of God's displeasure to him.
>
> –Ant.*18.5.2*

This passage's authenticity has been questioned. Aside from that issue, immersion was indicative of purification of the soul that is repentance, prior to physical purification. Also this purification did not erase sin, but was the culminating part in the process of turning from sin. It is similar to immersion at the time of conversion to Judaism. It also shows that a simple religious program could be feared as an incitement with political repercussions. Religious movements were possible revolutionary movements, and could be curtailed by the native authorities on behalf of their Roman overlords; otherwise, the Romans would put down a popular movement themselves, killing without discretion and letting "God sort out the innocent," as they say. The idea of the Land of Promise, as the Kingdom of Yahweh, was not abstract as it is in the modern concept of separation of church from state. Yahwistic religion is the union of religion with a specific territory, and to be occupied by gentile nations was matter of religious failure and defilement. The success of a religious "revival" would require the complete removal of gentile rule. This is why any popular Jewish religious movement was a direct threat to Rome. The situation is comparable to fundamentalist Muslim reactions to colonial, economic, and even cultural presence of the Christian West.

What may be considered different, perhaps innovative, about Yahḥanan's immersion is that the immersion of the Torah has mostly to do with defilement and remedial purification concerning sacred precincts; yet, Yahḥanan was addressing a spiritual condition and remedy in repentance to Torah. Immersion here was a public acknowledgement of repentance and a commitment to live righteously. People also saw immersion (bathing) as part of the procedure of cleansing to enter sacred space (Lev 15)—an extended sacred space far beyond the Temple.

The Community Rule from Qumran (1QS) sin caused physical and spiritual defilement and so, like Yahḥanan taught, repentance was required first.

> "…no one may enter the water … unless he has repented of his wrongdoing, because defilement clings to all transgressors of His word." *-5.13-14*

Repentence is associated with holy spirit exhibited by the repentent.

> "By the spirit of holiness … a man is cleansed from all sins. " *-3.7-8*

In the same way, we require repentance first, and a time in which a person can engage Torah life, fully accepting the responsibilities and benefits of Torah, before full acceptance into the community. After that time, the person will be counseled regarding the completion of their conversion, and then undergo circumcision, if applicable, and then undergo immersion. Here it might be proper to discuss requirements concerning circumcision and immersion.

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Reading the Bible תנ"ך

A Practical Guide

For the Ebionite reading the Bible is essential in life and worship. Therefore, this article is will provide some instruction in the importance of scripture reading and understanding how we approach the Bible as a tool for life.

Some Ebionites may come from a different culture than a Jewish (Yahwistic) one, so we first define what we mean by Bible and scripture. Today the term *Hebrew Bible* is in vogue, while others employ the Christian term *Old Testament*. But for the Evyonim, there is only one "testament" and we do not consider it old, but eternally valid without comparison to an alleged "new testament." A book that includes an old and a new testament is a Christian bible and cannot be considered holy to us. We do analyze the Christian writings which they consider to be their new testament for historical traces of the development of Yeshua's movement. But its witness is heavily redacted, and co-opted for supporting the mystery religion of Paul of Tarsus. We refer to these documents as Christian Writings (CW) and not NT.

Instead, Ebionites read the Bible (also called Torah, Nevi'im and Ketuvim, or by the acronym Tanak) only as scripture. Although some Christian translations of our holy scriptures are good (such as the Catholic *Jerusalem Bible*), Ebionites should use true Bibles supplied from Jewish sources. If you ever open a "bible" and find a "new testament," it is not a Bible worthy of the word "holy" and should not be used for religious life before God.

We will use the acronym Tanak [tuh-NAHKh] to help the new student (or, *talmid*) to Evyonut (ehv-yoh-NOOT, "ebionitism"). You may see this acronym in various forms (such as *Tenach*, *Tanach*, or *Tanakh*, etc.) since Hebrew does not always come across to English uniformly. A good Tanak will include the Hebrew text of the scriptures. Other features should include a good English translation, divisions of parshas (more on this below), and show the difference in narrative and poetic passages of scripture, and as much of the original structure as possible. One that does this is the *JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh* (Philadelphia: 2000). Another good one is the Koren *Jerusalem Bible*. For Evyonim the "official" Bible is the Hebrew text, not a particular English translation, and this Hebrew text will be identical in these and most other Hebrew-English Bibles. Another good reason to read a Bible from a Jewish source rather than a Christian bible is that verse divisions are often different in them. Try to use Jewish versification.

Reading the Torah and Religious Services

The Torah [toh-RAH], or first five books of the Tanak (and even Christian bibles), are read throughout the world by Jews together as part of religious service. This is achieved by dividing up these five books into *parshas* (actually *parashah*, pl. *parashiyyot*), also called *sedarim* by some (although this term refers more likely to the triennial reading cycle). These

are scheduled over weeks, Shabbat to Shabbat, through the year. In any Jewish place of worship using this system you will hear the same section (or portion) of Torah being read on the same Shabbat and services during that week. You can see this schedule of readings for the next few months on the Calendar page of this magazine.

You will notice that each reading is a Hebrew word or two that are actually the first words of the section (parsha). For example, the first parsha of the book B'reishiyt ([bray-SHEET] or Genesis) is called B'reishiyt, like the book itself because both come from the first words, meaning, "At the beginning…." In better Bibles these sections are clearly marked. That way we can find our place easily if we know what the parsha of the week is, and that can be found on Jewish calendars and many places on the internet if we lose track. Using this system, we can read the Torah together in a year's time. But this does not mean you cannot read the entire Bible in the method of your choosing.

By reading the parshas together over many centuries much study has been generated on their meaning for us. The Jews of the past wrote and collected explanations, stories, and commentaries as they searched these scriptures called *midrashim*. And today people continue to write explanations and insights on each Torah parsha called a *davar Torah*, or a study on the Torah. As you may already know, there are books for religious purpose containing just the five Torah books, and you might see them listed as a *Torah* or a *Ḥumash* [khoo-MAHSH] which means "five" in reference to the five books of Torah. You may benefit greatly from having a Bible and a Torah which includes commentary of some type.

With the reading of the parashah, a haftarah ([hahf-tah-RAH], pl. haftarot [-ROHT]), or selection from the Nevi'im [neh-vih-EEM], or "prophets" also is read. But we encourage you to read all the prophets, and entire Bible using a method that suits you.

There is an alternative system of reading the Torah over a three year period, or triennial cycle, existed in Palestine, Egypt, and perhaps Yemen into the early Middle Ages, but this system has been a matter of speculative reconstruction.

The Masoretic text marks 154 *sedarim* of the triennial system, but witnesses also give 161 (Menachem Me'iri), 167 (Yemen), and 175 in the rabbinic tractate *Soferim* 16.10 (*Jewish Encyclopedia*, "Triennial Cycle," http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=327&letter=T). The triennial system was no doubt used and shows intriguing connections between the readings and the calendar. In recent years a triennial system of readings has been proposed by Rabbi Lionel Moses to the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards ("Is There an Authentic Triennial Cycle of Torah Readings"). But there are too many problems with adopting the triennial reconstructions at the present time, and we will be using the year cycle.

We won't go into the rituals and blessings of a worship service related to these readings here because we want to encourage a regimen of scripture reading individually, even by isolated people.

Tehillim

While a good number of psalms are used in the worship service, again this regimen is also aimed at individual reading of the Psalms (*Tehillim* [te-hil-LEEM]). The Ebionite book of praise is *Sefer Tehillim* [say-fer], the book of Psalms.

Sefer Tehillim can be broken into five books, and in the ancient Midrash Tehillim it is said that Mosheh gave Israel the five books of the Torah, and correspondingly *Dawid Hammelek* (King David) gave them five books of psalms. As Ebionites we have come to use the psalms in various ways, and the subject deserves its own article. But in keeping with this discussion of reading the Bible, especially as a personal daily, weekly and yearly regimen, we can present a correspondence between the weekly parshas and psalms.

The books of Psalms are: 1st 1-41; 2nd 42-72; 3rd 73-89; 4th 90-106; 5th 107-150. So to break down a number of psalms per parsha.

Book	Parshas	Psalms
B'reishiyt (Gn.)	12	41
Shmot (Ex.)	11	30
Wayyiqra (Lev.)	10	16
Bemidbar (Nu.)	10	16
Devarim (De.)	10	43

We only suggest psalms with the parshas, as one method of supplementing them with the Psalms.

There are other approaches to reading the Psalms, and some Jews read them weekly or monthly. Here are tables to aid you in both approaches.

Reading Tehillim in One Week

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Shabbat
1-29	30-50	51-72	73-89	90-106	107-119	120-150

Reading Tehillim in One (Lunar) Month

First Week		Second		Third		Fourth		Fifth	
1	1-9	8	44-48	15	77-78	22	106-107	29	140-144
2	10-17	9	49-54	16	79-82	23	108-112	29/30	145-150
3	18-22	10	55-59	17	83-87	24	113-118		
4	23-28	11	60-65	18	88-89	25	119.1-96		
5	29-34	12	66-68	19	90-96	26	119.97-176		
6	35-38	13	69-71	20	97-103	27	120-134		
7	39-43	14	72-76	21	104-105	28	135-139		

Now here are the parshas of the yearly cycle of readings.

B'reishiyt			
Parasha	**Passage**	**Haftara**	**Tehillim**
B'reshiyt	Gen. 1.1-6.8	Isaiah 42.5-43.10 (S'fardi ritual: Isaiah 42.5-21)	1-4
Noah	Gen. 6.9-11.32	Isaiah 54.1-55.5 (S'fardi ritual: Isaiah 54.1-10)	5-8
Lekh-Lekha	Gen. 12.1-17.27	Isaiah 40.27-41.16	9-10
Wayyera	Gen. 18.1-22.24	II Kings 4.1-37 (S'fardi ritual: II Kings 4.1-23)	11-12
Hayye Sarah	Gen. 23.1-25.18	I Kings 1.1-31	13-15
Toldot	Gen. 25.19-28.9	Malachi 1.1-2.7	16-18
Wayyetze	Gen. 28.10-32.3	Hosea 12.13-14.10 (Optional addition: Micah 7.18) (S'fardi ritual: Hosea 11.7-12.12)	19-22
Wayyishlah	Gen. 32.4-36.43	Obadiah 1.1-21 (Optional substitution: Hosea 11.7-12.12)	23-26
Wayyeshev	Gen. 37.1-40.23	Amos 2.6-3.8	27-29
Mikeitz	Gen. 41.1-44.17	I Kings 3.15-4.1	30-33
Wayyiggash	Gen. 44.18-47.27	Ezekiel 37.15-28	34-37
Wayyehi	Gen. 47.28-50.26	I Kings 2.1-12	38-41

Sh'mot			
Parasha	**Passage**	**Haftara**	**Tehillim**
Shemot	Ex. 1.1-6.1	Isaiah 27.6-28.13, 29.22-23 (S'fardi ritual: Jeremiah 1.1-2.3).	42
Wa'era	Ex. 6.2-9.35	Ezekiel 28.25-29.21	43-45
Bo'	Ex. 10.1-13.16	Jeremiah 46.13-28	46-48
Beshalah	Ex. 13.17-17.16	Judges 4.4-5.31 (S'fardi ritual: Judges 5.1-31)	49-51
Yitro	Ex. 18.1-20.23	Isaiah 6.1-7.6, 9.5-6 (S'fardi ritual: 6.1-13)	52-54
Mishpatim	Ex. 21.1-24.18	Jeremiah 34.8-22, 33.25-26	55-57
Terumah	Ex. 25.1-27.19	I Kings 5.26-6.13	58-60
Tetzaveh	Ex. 27.20-30.10	Ezekiel 43.10-27	61-63
Kiy Tissa	Ex. 30.11-34.35	I Kings 18.1-39 (S'fardi ritual: I Kings 18.20-39)	64-66
Wayakhel	Ex. 35.1-38.20	I Kings 7.40-50 (S'fardi ritual: I Kings 7.13-26)	67-69
Pekude:	Ex. 38.21-40.38	I Kings 7.51-8.21 (S'fardi: substitute I Kings 7.40-50)	70-72

Wayyiqra			
Parasha	**Passage**	**Haftara**	**Tehillim**
Wayyiqra	Le. 1.1-5.26	Isaiah 43.21-44.23	73
Tzaw	Le. 6.1-8.36	Jeremiah 7.21-8.3, 9.22-23	74
Shemini	Le. 9.1-11.47	II Samuel 6.1-7.17 (S'fardi ritual: II Samuel 6.1-19)	75
Tazria	Le. 12.1-13.59	II Kings 4.42-5.19	76
Metzora	Le. 14.1-15.33	II Kings 7.3-20	77
Ahare Mot	Le. 16.1-18.30	Ezekiel 22.1-19 (S'fardi ritual: Ezekiel 22.1-16)	78
Qedoshim	Le. 19.1-20.27	Amos 9.7-15 (S'fardi ritual: Ezekiel 20.2-20)	79-84
Emor	Le. 21.1-24.23	Ezekiel 44.15-31	85
Behar	Le. 25.1-26.2	Jeremiah 32.6-27	86
Behukotai	Le. 26.3-27.34	Jeremiah 16.19-17.14	87-89

Bemidbar			
Parasha	**Passage**	**Haftara**	**Tehillim**
Bemidbar	Num. 1.1-4.20	Hosea 2.1-22	90-92
Naso	Num. 4.21-7.89	Judges 13.2-25	93-95
Beha'alotekha	Num. 8.1-12.16	Zechariah 2.14-4.7	96
Shelah	Num. 13.1-15.41	Joshua 2.1-24	97
Qorah	Num. 16.1-18.32	I Samuel 11.14-12.22	98-99
Hukkat	Num. 19.1-22.1	Judges 11.1-33	100
Balak	Num. 22.2-25.9	Micah 5.6-6.8	101-102
Pinhas	Num. 25.10-30.1	I Kings 18.46-19.21	103
Mattot	Num. 30.2-32.42	Jeremiah 1.1-2.3	104
Mase	Num. 33.1-36.13	Jeremiah 2.4-28, 3.4, 4.1-2 (S'fardi ritual: Jeremiah 2.4-28, 4.1-2)	105-106

Devarim			
Parasha	**Passage**	**Haftara**	**Tehillim**
Devarim	De. 1.1-3.22	Isaiah 1.1-27	107-110
Wa'et'Hanan	De. 3.23-7.11	Isaiah 40.1-26	111-114
Ekev	De. 7.12-11.25	Isaiah 49.14-51.3	115-120
Re'eh	De. 11.26-16.17	Isaiah 54.11-55.5	121-125
Shoftim	De. 16.18-21.9	Isaiah 51.12-52.12	126-130
Kiy Tetze	De. 21.10-25.19	Isaiah 54.1-10	131-134
Kiy Tavo	De. 26.1-29.8	Isaiah 60.1-22	135-139
Nitzavim	De. 29.9-30.20	Isaiah 61.10-63.9	140-143
Wayyelekh	De. 31.1-30	Isaiah 55.6-56.8	144-146
Ha`azinu	De. 32.1-52	II Samuel 22.1-51	147-150

Some Final Considerations

Remember that parshas are also dictated by special sabbaths and holy days, so it is good to consult a calendar, whether it is paper or computer program (like Aishluach). Concerning reading the prophets, some criticism comes from Christians that Jews do not read sections they claim support their worship of Jesus as a god as weekly haftarot (such as Isaiah 53). They do not understand that the haftarot were not intended to be a means to read all the prophets. Nevertheless, we invite you to read all the prophets in whatever way suits you. You will find no support for idolatry.

Interfaith Marriage:

Are You Destroying the Jewish People?

Jewish children showing their tattooed arms at a concentration camp.

How many children died in the Sho`ah (Holocaust) for being Jewish? If you could go back in time to save them, would you? Could you put together the resources and be brave enough to risk your own life to travel through Nazi Europe to save even one child from millions of people intent on destroying all Jews from the face of the earth?

It was almost impossible to do such a thing. But you can save a Jewish child, your own child, today to ensure that Israel survives from a more deadly threat. The Jewish people are in decline today in another type of Holocaust through intermarriage, and many Jews are entrapped by love to help in the same goal the Nazis had a half century ago—eliminating Jews—not with gas, starvation, and bullets but by choosing not to save their children from religious and secular Christianity, and other religions and cultures. Many Jews have become non-religious or unaffiliated with any branch of Judaism, and the Jewish population in the United States is estimated to shrink 5% per decade. Are we helping to destroy our own people voluntarily after resisting 2000 years of Christian efforts to destroy us through persecution and coerced conversion? Are our own gentile partners perpetrating the most heinous crime against our children—killing their covenant faith and making them Christians? For centuries Jews would rather have died as Jews than live as something else. But now Jews would rather die, and kill future generations of God's People than be impolite, lose the object of their affection, or not fit in with gentile friends and neighbors. We would rather worship a gentile lover than the God of Israel. Perhaps many Jews of the Holocaust generation would have killed themselves, if they knew future Jews would assist the gentiles in continuing the Final Solution, to destroy Jews and the Jewish Faith , just decades later

We realize that falling in love with a person outside the biblical faith is very likely, especially when Jews have always been a tiny nation. When you consider that many Jews are not faithful but rely on a genetic link to define their Jewishness, the number plummets further still. The United States is the proverbial "melting pot" where peoples of every conceivable place and imaginable culture have come to live and build a nation known for its tolerance and pluralism. It is almost expected that we will work together, play together, and so is it any surprise that we date or marry outside our own culture and religion?

We might think of interfaith relationships as it happens between Jews and Christians, since it is our main concern as Ebionites. The small number of *evyonim* often find themselves submerged in the Christian culture, and so there is a very good chance that an Ebionite will marry one. But interfaith marriages often include one type of Christian with another from historically hostile Christian sects, such as Protestants and Catholics. So interfaith marriages and the difficulties they raise are not at all a result of a lack of co-religionists. Intermarriage occurs, for example, in areas with large ethnic communities whether they be Muslim, Buddhist, Jewish, or another. Jews are marrying Christians whether it is New York, Atlanta, Los Angeles, or small towns with tiny communities or a few families. And the strength of one's religious heritage is not an indicator of the Mr. or Miss Right to whom they will open their heart.

The truth is that when love comes calling, religion is the least important thing to worry about. This is what is considered normal in a country where it is considered impolite to speak too much of religion, where religion is pushed aside for the greater good, and beginning with the first day of school we are conditioned, with few exceptions, to realize

that Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, and other cultures are just that—*other* cultures than American culture. In fact, the public school movement's mission was to Americanize non-white, non-Anglo-Saxon protestant immigrants and stir them into a homogenous cultural soup. The Roman Catholic Irish and Italians, as well as European Jews were seen as a grave threat to "American" "WASP" culture, as well as the Chinese in the West. Religious scruples were traded for the pursuit of happiness and prosperity. Religion is okay as long as it doesn't interfere with anything, is the unwritten rule of the Christian culture to which almost all Americans now subscribe. To break this sacred commandment is to invite ridicule and social ostracism. We cannot begin to understand the power of such ostracism!

Then there is the matter of racism. Although there are plenty of racists to be found, in America people of African, European, Native American, Asian, and Hispanic colorings intermarry and raise families, and to oppose such unions is now seen as bigotry and narrow-mindedness. So if we promote marriage only between Jews that too may be seen as racism. But there is no specific Jewish race or color, only a culture based on a religion. In our opinion, without that religion there is no "Jewish People" other than tracing one's ancestors through generations of people involved in that religion. Ebionites do not care what color you are; we care only that you embrace biblical Yahwism which includes Judaism and keep that faith alive in yourself and your children.

In our open modern culture, and the rightful respect of women as equals, marriage is not a matter where a wife is bargained over among males or arranged by families. And while in the past, including during the biblical period, such things were done, those days are gone. Marriage today is seen as a partnership agreement, a 50/50 endeavor equally between a man and woman (well… let's tackle one problem at a time for now).

Accordingly, it seems only right that when two people of differing religious backgrounds join in such a partnership that these different religious traditions, obligations, or sentiments may be equally important in the relationship and resulting family. So we come down to it. Can your family consist of a husband and wife of different religions, equally including both religions' ways in the family life and upbringing of children? You must ask two questions. Can there be a real chance of a 50/50 inclusion of both religions? And can the nature of the two religions allow real co-existence?

Look at the culture around us. Your child will be participating in it, and that culture and members of it will have a strong, strong influence on your child's life as they play, go to school, watch TV, participate in community activities, and eventually work and find their own partner. You should quickly see that your ideal 50/50 marriage, perhaps of understanding, respect, and best intentions could be just a fantasy world. There are more than two people with a child or two in the real world. For the Jewish person married to a person whose culture inundates the whole society, that 50% almost disappears in the wake of cultural onslaught facing a Jew. You become a tiny minority even in your own home and family and in the life of your child as the culture at large comes to claim and convert another Jewish child and end another generation of the Jewish People. It doesn't matter if your spouse actively participates in the child stealing or not. There are thousands around you who see it as their religious duty to convert your children (and you) by any means necessary, and meanwhile you must sit silently in fear of offending one of their own—your spouse, possibly losing them. It's almost as if we are sitting there watching our children being taken off to the camps without a word, or witnessing the Spanish Catholics take Jewish children to raise as Christians while we are forced to convert or leave the country—and our own partner is helping. As a Jew you will always find that you have much, much less than 50% cultural influence in the marriage.

In a Jewish-Christian intermarriage a 50/50 relationship cannot exist successfully. One religion or the other, or both will be pushed aside no matter what the couple does. It is not all in the couple's hands! In fact, it would be hard enough if both parents impressed the child to be Jewish against the dominant culture around them. The child will be shown on TV for hours each day what "normal" people do, think, eat, buy, worship, and celebrate. The schools where they will spend most of their day, 8 hours a day, five days a week, 36 weeks a year for 13 to perhaps 18 years or more will be featuring some degree of Christian culture as normal. When they shop, they will hardly see anything available pertaining to their own religious culture, but be buried in Christian paraphernalia that seems to drive sales on which the stores survive. When they go to work a desire to deviate from the work week dictated by money and Christian religious considerations will be a source of dread as they ask to observe the holy days in apologetic humility as if they were doing something wrong. As they drive down the road they will be driving through the land of Christians complete with signs, symbols and shrines. But Christianity is not normal; it is paganism. They will see that this land is not one that

wants them here. It will take endless, and whole love and support of both parents to save the Jewish child from destruction in a pagan land. It is no job for cowards or spouses who hate the faith of God. The one exception is to have parents that claim to be Christian or Jew but in reality be neither.

They must be one or neither because Yahwism (including Judaism) is not compatible with Christianity (or other faiths). Jews are Jews because they cherish what the biblical God of Israel commanded. Let's be honest. Most non-Jews think those commandments are stupid, even if they post the "Ten Commandments" or schlep a Bible around. They mock God's dietary laws, His "funny holidays," and most symbols of Jewish identity. We are commanded to not be like gentiles (non-Jews), adopt their ways of faith, or allow marriage to gentile spouses to avoid the danger of them luring us away from our faith according to God's commandments. While non-Jews have no clear prohibition from attending worship of anything anywhere, we cannot do so in good conscience or obedience to God. In other words, for example, while Christians might attend a Jewish service without consequence, we may not reciprocate without it pointing to some severe deficiency in our faith. We are not allowed to even use the names of other gods in worship or reverence. And while, again as example, Christians are reliant upon the Jewish Scriptures to support their religion (they call them an "Old Testament"), we have no need whatsoever of the Christian scriptures (that they call "New Testament"). Their scripture is clearly a means to criticize and reject the religion of our God in order to create a new religion in which they claim that everyone, except Christian initiates, will burn in eternal torment. So how can these two religions, one rejecting the other, co-exist—seriously?

One way is to reject the tenets of both, be non-religious, perhaps agnostic or atheist, and consider the traditions of both religions to be no more than old myths. The humanistic ethics of both religions may pass muster, or humanism itself, but keep in mind that the humanism of Judaism and that of Christianity are not necessarily compatible. But to raise a child in both conflicting religious traditions as if they were the same or complimentary, or equally legitimate, will create confusion when the differences surface and are noticed by a reasonably intelligent child. If parents can tell a child that there is a Santa Claus, or a man who was perfect and God incarnate, perhaps everything the parents teach will be questionable when the child learns that these things are not true. They will perhaps consider the very existence of God to be another fable. Another similar approach is to cultivate a certain degree of stupidity or apathy or even aversion to religion other than conforming to whatever those around them desire. But a child that is taught such conformity will conform to whoever is around them, whether they use drugs, commit crime, or follow a religious mob. The child can be taught to waste their God-given mind and integrity, submitting or prostituting themselves to the group-mind of the majority, and in the case of the current society, this means becoming a Christian.

There are intelligent Christians who remain so for one reason. They know that their religion is questionable at best, that it has committed horrible crimes against humanity, that its practices are unbiblical. But they cannot be brave enough to act on the truth, let go of their pagan heritage, society, family and friends, or face the ostracism that will come to them for turning to God. If Jews must intermarry, please pray for them to find a partner with the integrity and honesty to admit the truth and act upon it. When they see that Jesus was not a Christian nor could he, as a brave and loyal Jew believing in God, ever approve of Christianity, they will become a real partner in preserving our biblical faith. Otherwise, their lack of integrity, apathetic attitudes and dishonesty will manifest in other ways that could destroy not only their children but their marriage.

Jews are Jews because they do not waste children in such a way, but teach the commandments of God to them as the Torah instructs us. We do not learn the ways of the nations or engage in idolatry. We use our minds to see past those around us who selfishly chase the desire of the moment. we choose the way of eternity's God and all of His creation. We exist for a reason and purpose. Don't allow or help those who cannot see destroy us.

Good parents teach their children that the world has consequences, that we cannot do whatever we please and justify it will silly excuses with impunity. They teach their children to do good, not just what they think is good, through rules and boundaries, out of love instead of threat and superstitions about monsters. Will you save a Jewish child and Judaism, or help destroy one and our People?

Jewish women and children, shot to fill a mass grave.

Israel's Bible: An Introduction to the Yahwistic Scriptures, Part One

This is the first part of a serialized version of our publication project Israel's Bible*. Included in this first part you will find a section that will serve as part one of our* Introduction to Biblical Hebrew*.*

Chapter Objectives

- Acquire a new concept of "Bible"
- Become familiar with the divisions of the Bible
- Learn the system of transliteration for biblical Hebrew.

Key Terms

Tanak	Transliteration
Miqra'	Vowel-points
Torah	Masorah
Nevi'im	Masoretic Text
Ketuvim	Consonantal Text

As You Read, Answer . . . .

How is the Bible/Tanak different than the "Old Testament"?
How is your knowledge of biblical books different than before?
What did the Masoretes do?
What should you look for in obtaining a Bible?

The Bible is the collective memory of a people and its relationship to its god. In this introduction the highest priority will be given to understanding the Bible as the eternal testament of a tiny people who have influenced the history and nations of the entire world.

Most of us come from a background very different from the Bible and therefore understand it second hand through cultures and theologies historically hostile to the culture and religion of scripture. This is why the fallacious sectarian term *Old Testament* will not be used and the presupposition that there is a "new" testament will be rejected. Many readers will be starting from scratch in many ways. And so let's us start from the beginning by replacing that foreign understanding and opening up avenues to a new view of the scripture of ancient Israel.

A Biblical Vocabulary

An authentic biblical vocabulary is a start at the ground floor in our study. In *Israel's Bible* you will see the Hebrew terms for people, places, usages and concepts. It is suggested that while reading this book you begin to become familiar with Biblical Hebrew, yet there will be information provided to aid the reader.[1] So the first term you should become familiar with is ***Tanak***[2] because this term will be used very often in this textbook. More terms will follow later in the chapter.

Tanak is an abbreviation of three Hebrew words describing the three main divisions of scripture. These divisions are: Torah, Nevi'im, Ketuvim.

So you can now see that *Tanak* takes the first letter from each of the three Hebrew divisions. The Hebrew way of abbreviating this is תנ״ך. Another term used to describe the Bible is מִקְרָא Miqrāʾ, or "*that read*"[3] In this textbook, Bible and Tanak refer to the exact same thing.

You will see Hebrew extensively featured throughout the book. We use transliteration and the Hebrew so often to emphasize the uniqueness of our subject. The largest percent of the biblical documents were written

Instructions	Tôrāh	תּוֹרָה
Prophets	N^{e}bîʾîm	נְבִיאִים
Writings	K^{e}tûbîm	כְּתוּבִים

originally in Hebrew, and our non-Hebrew language translations (such as English) do not do justice to proper nouns or fully translate Hebrew ideas behind Hebrew words. For example, most people call the personages of the Tanak something very different than their actual names. But in this textbook you will see these names as pronounced in the Hebrew of the Tanak. So do not be afraid to try to pronounce them.

Why would we include this information about the Hebrew Language in an introduction to the Bible? Once again, we emphasize the importance of understanding the culture that produced the Bible in order to understand it, even if we can only scratch the surface of this multi-faceted, almost endless subject. And further, we hope the student is able to use this approach, accepting Israel and its Bible on the terms of its own culture, to learn to view other cultures in the world on their own terms to increase awareness and thus understanding if not appreciation.

Transliterating Hebrew

Hebrew characters and sounds are not always equivalent to the Roman alphabet and the sounds of English, a word is often transliterated variously in English publications, for example, Hannuka, a minor holiday celebrating Jewish victory over Hellenistic occupation, may appear as Channukah, Hanukka, and otherwise. This is because of the Hebrew letter ח it begins with is guttural sound (a *glottal stop*) made in the throat. Many English speakers find it hard to come to terms with ח as there is no regular equivalent English sound or symbol to represent it.

Transliteration from language to language is not always easy, as seen in the example above, and has never been so, especially using standard alphabets. This is the reason that we see very different names in the Greek translation of the Tanak (which is called the *Septuagint* or LXX)[4] further complicated by Latin translations (partially based on the LXX), and even changes of sounds within the translation language over time. For example, Greek has no equivalent sound to the sound of Hebrew שׁ, and to this day many people are familiar with the Moses but not Mōšeh. You will soon see a fact that affects all traditional English Bible names we know that begin with the English letter 'J'.

Transliteration is a system used to represent the symbols or characters of one language into another in attempt to accurately represent the original sounds.

But by using special characters to represent every sound in Hebrew and knowing their pronunciation we can correct this ancient deficiency in transliteration. So please study the aid to pronunciation provided by Table 1-1.

MS 5070
Hebrew Bible with Masora parva and magna from Spain, second half of 13th c.

Hebrew characters are all consonants. Hebrew reads from right to left. Vowels, of course, were pronounced but were only represented later by vowel points (*niqqûḏîm*). Vowel points and other notations were provided by scribes referred to as the *Masoretes*.

Table 1.1: Consonants[5]

א	ʾālef	'	ʾ		*silent; takes vowel*
ב בּ	bêṯ[6]	b	b̲	b	*v, b*
ג גּ	gîmel	g	ḡ	g	*gh, g*
ד דּ	dāleṯ	d	ḏ	d	*dh, d*
ה	hê	j	h		*h*
ו	wāw	w	w		*w*
ז	zayin	z	z		*z*
ח	ḥêṯ	h	ḥ		lo*ch*
ט	ṭêṯ	=	ṭ		*sharp t*
י	yôḏ	y	y		*y*
כ כּ	kāf	k	k̲	k	*kh, k*
ך	kāf sôfîṯ				
ל	lāmeḏ	l	l		*l*
מ	mêm	m	m		*m*
ם	mêm sôfîṯ				
נ	nûn	n	n		*n*
ן	nûn sôfîṯ				
ס	sāmeḵ	v	s		*ss*
ע	ʿāyin	`	ʿ		*hard glottal stop*
פ פּ	pê	p	f (p̄) p		*f, p*
ף	pê sôfîṯ				
צ	ṣāḏê	x	ṣ		ha*ts*
ץ	ṣāḏê sôfîṯ				
ק	qôf	q	q		*q*
ר	rêš	r	r		*rolled r /w*
שׁ	šîn	s	š		*sh*
שׂ	śîn	s	ś		*s*
ת תּ	tāw	t	ṯ	t	*th*at, *t*

Consonants כ, מ, נ, פ, and צ have a different form when found at the end of a word. Here we call them the sôpîṯ form. The consonants ב, ג, ד, כ, פ, and ת have a "hardened" or "doubled" sound marked by a dot (dagesh) within their body.

In Table 1.1 the *Square Script* form, character name, the *Palaeo-Hebrew* form, transliteration, and the phonology for the Hebrew *Alef-Bet* is given. The Palaeo-Hebrew Alef-Bet is the ancestor of the characters you have been reading. Do you see the similarities? The Greek peoples borrowed the Semitic alphabet letters and some of the sounds, thus changing the Alef-Bet into an *alpha-beta*, and eventually it became what we call the *alphabet*. The Square Script Hebrew is a later form than Palaeo-Hebrew one, yet this Square Script is the form seen in most Hebrew books for many centuries now. Most extant manuscripts of biblical writings use some form of Square Script. But we will discuss this and the Masoretes later.

Table 1.2: Vowel-points

אָ	qāmāṣ	ā	**a**ther
אַ	ḥăṭāf pāttāḥ	ă	**a**lone
אְ	šᵉwā	ᵉ ᵊ	mathem atics
אֵ	ṣêrê	ē	f**a**vor
אֵי	ṣêrê yôḏ	ê	th**ey**
אֶ	ḥăṭāf sᵉḡôl	ĕ	enemy
אֹ	ḥôlām	ō	**o**bey
אֹ	ḥôlām mālēʾ	ô	**o**pen
אֳ	ḥăṭāf qāmāṣ	ŏ	**co**lloqui al
אַ	pattāḥ	a	p**a**t
אָ	qāmāṣ ḥăṭûf	o	s**o**ft
אֶ	sᵉḡôl	e	m**e**t
וּ	šûrûq wāw	û	bl**ue**s
אֻ	qubbuṣ	u	m**oo**n
אִ	ḥîrîq	i	h**i**t
אִי	ḥîrîq yôḏ	î	mach**i**ne
אַ֫	pattāḥ gᵉnûḇāh	ᵃ	we'**re**

Here א stands in as any consonant that the vowel might be found in combination with.

The Biblical Writings of the Tanak

The Bible, sometimes also called Hebrew Bible, Tanakh, Tenach, Jewish Scriptures, and wrongly "Old Testament" by Christians, is the collected writings that Jews came to regard as the written witness to Israel's relationship with God. The most important group of these writings, the Torah, provides accounts of Israel's origins and in relation to other nations, our encounter with God, and our covenant relationship which serves as a type of constitution with rights, goals, and duties of a covenant society. The Nevi'im ("Prophets") deal with men who came to return us to covenant when our people strayed from the Torah. The Ketuvim ("Writings") are miscellaneous writings created by people conscious of God and our covenant with Him. The Nevi'im and Ketuvim provide examples to us so we can have a rich base of experience to draw from in our own lives in covenant with the God of Israel, our God. As a people who has such a unique history and culture, we can rediscover

our scriptures according to that unique heritage. Now that we can pronounce the names of the Hebrew "books" of the Tanak, they can be listed according to their categories:

תּוֹרָה Ṯôrāh

Called	Meaning	Others	Others' Meaning	Common Spelling Suggestion
Bᵉrēʾšîṯ	At the beginning...	Genesis	beginning, birth	Breishiyt
Wᵉʾēlleh Šᵉmôṯ	And these names...	Exodus	going out	Shmot
Wāyyiqrāʾ	And he said...	Leviticus	of Levites	Wayyiqra
Bᵉmiḏbār	In the wilderness...	Numbers	numbers	B'midvar
Dᵉḇārîm	Words...	Deuteronomy	second law	D'varim

נְבִיאִים Nᵉḇîʾîm

Nᵉḇîʾîm Riʾšōnîm -Former Prophets

Called	Meaning	Others	Common Spelling Suggestion
Yᵉhôšûʿā Yāhwᵉšûʿā	Yah(weh) is salvation	Joshua	Yhoshua, Yahshua
Šōfᵉṭîm	Judges	judges	Shoftim
Šᵉmûʾēl	El (God) hears	Samuel (1 & 2)	Shmu'el
Mᵉlāḵîm	Kings	Kings (1 & 2)	Melakim

Nᵉḇîʾîm ʾĀḥărônîm -Latter Prophets

Called	Meaning	Others	Common Spelling Suggestion
Yᵉšāʿyāh	Yah(weh) is savior	Isaiah	Yeshayah
Yirmᵉyāh	Yah(weh) is high	Jeremiah	Yirmeyah
Yᵉḥezqʾēl	El (God) makes strong	Ezekiel	Yekhizqel
The Twelve			
Hôšēʿā	saved	Hosea	Hoshea
Yôʾēl	Yah(weh) is El(ohim)		
ʿĀmôś	burdened	Amos	Amos
ʿŌḇāḏyāh	servant of Yah(weh)	Obadiah	Ovadyah
Yônāh	dove	Jonah	Yonah
Mîḵāh Mîḵāyāh	who is like Yah(weh) (?)	Micah	Miyka(yah)
Nāḥûm	consolation	Nahum	Nakhum
Ḥăḇāqqûq	held, embraced	Habakkuk	Havaqquq
Ṣᵉfānyāh	hidden by Yah(weh)	Zephaniah	Tsefanyah
Ḥāggāy	of celebration	Haggai	Khaggay
Zᵉḵāryāh	Yah(weh) remembers	Zechariah	Zekaryah
Mālʾāḵî	my messenger	Malachi	Mal'akiy

כְּתוּבִים Ḵᵉṯûḇîm

Called	Meaning	Others	Others' Meaning	Common Spelling Suggestion
Tᵉhillîm	Praises	Psalms	harp songs	Tehillim
ʿÎyôḇ	hated one (?)	Job		Iyyov

כְּתוּבִים Ḵᵉṯûḇîm, continued

Called	Meaning	Others	Others' Meaning	Common Spelling Suggestion
Mišlê	sayings	Proverbs		Mishley
Rûṯ	satiated, friend (?)	Ruth		Rut
Šîr Hāššîrîm	song of songs			Shir Hashirim
Qōheleṯ	assembler	Ecclesiastes	preacher	Qohelet
ʾÊḵāh	How!?	Lamentations	mourning songs	Eykah
ʾEsṯēr	star (Persian)	Esther		Ester
Ḏānîyʾēl	my judge is El	Daniel		Daniy'el
ʿEzrāʾ Nᵉḥemyāh	help, Yah(weh) comforts	Ezra; Nehemiah		Ezra-Nekhemyah
Ḏiḇrê Hāyyāmîm	accounts of days	Chronicles 1 & 2		Divray Hayyamim (alef-bet)

You notice that some of the Tanak books are called after the first few words we read in them, while some are named after a main character or the prophet whose name is mentioned. You will also notice a difference in the grouping and arrangement of the Bible books from the Christian treatment. Noticeable examples are the inclusion of Daniel as a prophet while the book is part of the Tanak's miscellaneous writings (Ketuvim); meanwhile, the prophets, particularly Malachi (Mal'akiy), are found at the end of their "Old Testament" to make Malachi and other prophets seem to point to Jesus, when chronologically parts of Isaiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah, all of Daniel (very late), and other books were written after the book of Malachi.

In this textbook little will be seen of Jeremiah or Isaac or Jacob, but instead these names and others will usually be replaced by transliterations from Hebrew and the reader will be assumed to have learned the tables presented above.

Required Resources

There are required texts to be used in conjunction with our textbook. First, a Bible that does not include a Christian "New Testament" as described below is absolutely needed. Although some maps are included in the textbook, a Bible **atlas** is needed. Several suggestions are given at chapter's end. Also the reading of ancient texts is required. Many can be found by searching the titles on the Internet, but reference will be made to the standard *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament.*[7]

Choosing a Bible

Our first suggestion is to have a Tanak in Hebrew. Currently that typically means having a "BHS" (*Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*). The BHS includes an apparatus containing variant readings from other ancient versions. There is always some debate as to primacy in texts and so the BHS may be desired. The BHS is based on the Masoretic Text of the Leningrad Codex B19^{A} (sigla, L). There is also the BHL (*Biblia Hebraica Leningradensia*, Aron Dotan, ed. 2001) which does not include the critical apparatus of the BHS. Another critical edition is in the works based on the Aleppo Codex.

But any Tanak that features the Masoretic Hebrew Text will suffice. Consider the size of the typesetting because vowel points and cantillation marks[8] can be hard to see clearly even if you have good vision.

A good alternative to a BHS is an Hebrew-English Bible. The *JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh*[9] is one of the better ones, also the Koren *Jerusalem Bible*[10] with the added feature of transliterating proper nouns decently instead of accepting the less accurate English versions. A usable tool to see a word for word grammatical translation of the Hebrew is the *Interlinear NIV Hebrew-English Old Testament*.[11]

Why do you need a Tanak in Hebrew or with the Hebrew Masoretic Text? It is our intention to impress upon you, the student, that the Bible (Tanak) is a Hebrew book and that all translations are open to human error and even bias. Also we want the student to be encouraged to study biblical Hebrew by placing a tool in hand to begin or continue that rewarding pursuit. This way the student can learn to read biblical Hebrew, understand it, and perhaps see more clearly the bias of previous translators.

There are other Hebrew-English Bibles of value. The Hebrew Text of all will undoubtedly be the Masoretic Text, and therefore, their only difference will be their translation and added features. When obtaining a Hebrew or Hebrew-English Bible, be aware that a *Torah* or *Humash* (also often spelled *Chumash*) are not what you are seeking, although these are worthwhile having. But these contain only the first five books of the Bible (referred to also as the *Pentateuch* and Five Books of Moses) often including readings from the Prophets called *haftarot*. The Torah is read by most Jews weekly in portions called *parashiyot* (sing., *parasha* or *parsha;* and also *sidra* or *sedarim*) through the year, each followed by a *haftarah*. A good Hebrew-English Bible will mark the parashiyot of the Torah in the English and Hebrew text.

The Masorah

The term Masoretic Text has been used a number of times, and so we will explain more fully what is meant by it.

The Hebrew language has undergone a several changes including the form of its characters and how sounds were represented. At first a script now referred to as Palaeo-Hebrew was used. It was not just used by Hebrews but commonly in the ancient Levant by their Canaanite-Phoenician cousins who took it West. There the Greek peoples employed it as their *alpha-beta*. This alef-bet became the basis of our English alphabet and the alphabet used by most Western nations today. We know of Palaeo-Hebrew and this stage of Hebrew mostly by inscriptions such as this one shown from Tell Dan, known as the House of David Inscription.

This earlier alphabet does not include symbols for vowel sounds as we know them and the only punctuation appears to be a "dot" used as a word divider.

Controversial Bet Dawid Inscription from Tell Dan featuring Palaeo-Hebrew characters.

Modern printed Hebrew typically does not include vowel symbols either, although it has adopted some Western style punctuation.

After the Exile of both the Northern Kingdom (Yisrael) and Southern Kingdom (Y'hudah), the Hebrew language increasingly became usurped by Aramaic, a related Semitic language, while Hebrew was used liturgically. The use of Hebrew among Jews was further jeopardized by the far-flung Jewish communities of the Diaspora (*Hāggûlāh*). Jews had long set up enclaves in Greek and Roman cities and began speaking Greek, Latin, and the languages of the nations in which they resided. In order to maintain unity among Jews and continuity of their heritage, Jewish scholars devised a system of notation to ensure a standard for reading the scriptures wherever the Jews found themselves. This endeavor involved the documenting of the traditional manner of pronouncing the words and even the inflection of scripture as passed down from those before them. In addition they noted all remarkable information concerning the biblical texts in the margins of their Bibles. This tradition, or *masorah*, preserved by ancient Jewish biblical experts is the basis of the Masoretic Text (MT, sigla 𝔐). Thus the MT is a combination of the Consonantal Text (CT) and the notation of these scholars. Particularly, since there were three common systems of notation, Babylonian, Palestinian, and Tiberian, using marks of different appearance, we should say that today the MT is based on the Tiberian Masorah. It should be noted that it is not the MT that is present for services in the synagogue, but that the scrolls used show the CT. Yet this CT is read (sung) according to the MT by memory. Remembering the proper tune and pronunciation is one of the tasks put before the Jewish boy making his *Bar Mitzvah* when he is called up to the *bema* (reading platform or pulpit) to read his passage of Torah for his first *aliya* (the act of ascending the bema).

Endnotes

[1] See the annotated bibliography. (Not part of the serial version.)

[2] In this book Tanak is used while there are various versions of transliteration such as Tenach and Tanakh. Tanakh is currently employed in a Bible version: *Tanakh, A New Translation of The Holy Scriptures According to the Traditional Hebrew Text*. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society. 1985. We will use Tanak to avoid confusion.

[3] Miqrāכ is similar in meaning to the Muslim *Qur'an* both related to the same Semitic word root, qrכ "*to read*."

[4] LXX is the Roman numeral for 70, supposedly the number of translators of the Torah into Greek. See Würthwein, Ernst. *The Text of the Old Testament: An Introduction to the Biblia Hebraica*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979. pp. 49-53. The Septuagint is also notated by the sigla 𝔊.

[5] Transliteration of Consonants and Vowel-points after *Handbook of Biblical Hebrew: An Inductive Approach Based on the Hebrew Text of Esther- Volume Two, Grammar*. William Sanford LaSor. Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1980. pp. 220-1. Key: H, Hebrew Square Script form; PH, Palaeo-Hebrew form (the archaic form shared by Punic and later borrowed by the Greeks providing the basis of Roman characters in use today's alphabet); T, Transliteration symbol .

[6] These letters had, at one time and some still, both a "hard" and "soft" pronunciation. They are known by an acronym BeGaDKePaT. Seen in later Ashuri (or Square Script) Hebrew, these six letters could in cases appear with a dot "in its belly" called a *ḏāḡēš*. This hardened the pronunciation. (*ḏāḡēš qāl* [Latin= *dagesh lene*] "light dagesh," or *ḏāḡēš qāšyān* "hardening dagesh.") (To confuse things), another dagesh, *ḏāḡēš ḵāflān*, doubles a consonant, including a BeGaDKePaT letter which is both doubled and hardened (*ḏāḡēš ḫāzāq*).

[7] Hereafter, ANET. *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*. Pritchard, James B., ed. 3rd edition. Princeton: Princeton U., 1969.

[8] Also called te'amim or accents. These are taken not only as accents, but also provide punctuation of a sort and musical notation. This is a subject unto itself and a Hebrew grammar should be consulted or a manual on the "trope"

should be obtained.

[9] *JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh: The Traditional Hebrew Text and the New JPS Translation*, 2nd ed. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2000.

[10] *The Holy Scriptures*. Jerusalem: Koren, 1998. English text, rev. ed., Harold Fisch.

[11] *Interlinear NIV Hebrew-English Old Testament*. Kohlenberger, John R. III. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987.

Principles to Live by

ṣaᶜar baᶜalê ḥayyim

צער בעלי חיים

Compassion to Animals

Our God teaches us in His Torah to love our fellow Israelite: Thou shalt not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am YHWH (L. 19:18). But did you know that we are told to have compassion upon animals also?

Many people are under the false impression that God put animals upon the earth for man to subdue and dominate, *without restriction*, to be cruel rulers without mercy or compassion. But His commandments inform us to be compassionate to other creatures. On the Shabbat our livestock is to be given rest just like ourselves (De. 5:14); as animals work in the field, they have the right to eat of the produce, just as humans may (De. 25:4); you cannot stand by to allow your neighbor's animal harm or plow with an uneven team (Ex. 23:5; De. 22:1ff); you cannot mix animals to make a hybrid that cannot reproduce. You may not castrate an animal, kill the young and mother in the same day, or cook a suckling in the milk of the mother. You cannot take a mother bird and her young but must leave the mother. From these and other commandments, we see that God has a concern for the welfare of animals, and the Jewish People have prohibitions against cruelty to animals not found in other religions (including Christianity) until recent times.

There is no prohibition against killing animals out of need for food or products, but the killing of such must be humane (why we have kashrut /"kosher" laws to govern this). Jews have the option (but not the obligation) of becoming vegetarians. Killing animals is not a "sport" but rather seen as a necessity. Our feeling is that a man who can exercise cruelty to animals or needlessly kill them inhumanely out of "sport" or pleasure, may be a person who could have little regard for human life as well. On the other hand many of the great men and women of the Bible showed compassion for animals which indicated a compassion and concern for their neighbors. Dawid and Mosheh were both shepherds and shepherded Israel; Rivqa (Rebecca) showed her sweetness and worth as a wife for Yitskhaq (Isaac) by watering animals. Yet Nimrod and Esaw, described as hunters are also villains of the scriptures. Again, hunting out of true need is not prohibited.

You have an obligation to look closely at what you eat and use to make sure animals are not being cruelly treated. Animals are used as guinea pigs for cruel experiments; calves are mistreated to make veal; poultry is often cooked while still alive; cattle is killed with hammer blows to the head. Investigate and act as people who believe in a merciful and compassionate God, not just to fellow human beings, but to all of God's creatures.

Let's Be Honest About Christmas

It's worse than pagan

Every year around the Christian celebration of Christmas, and other Christian holidays for that matter, we can read a barrage of articles and tracts revealing pagan influence found in them. There always seems to be some astonishing link to the Christian divine nemesis, Satan, designed to shock "true" believers into abandoning one Christian holiday or another.

On the other hand, we have conscientious Christians who decry the commercialization of Christmas and call for "putting Christ back into Christmas." They may criticize traditional Easter symbols like bunny rabbits and eggs, and instead emphasize resurrection. Some churches have begun featuring semi-Judaic "Passovers" in an attempt to gain a religious authenticity for Easter which Easter bonnets and baskets no longer achieve.

We will not bother providing a catalogue of Christian practices derived from "heathen" religion. We have no reason to reform Christianity or put "Jesus" back into something. Why? Because Christianity itself is fully pagan, and we would not slander Yeshua by putting him back into something he was never in to begin with. You cannot whittle away the pagan influences of Christianity and have anything left. Unfortunately, most people honestly analyzing their Christian faith go through this *whittling* process, cutting away things like Christmas trees, and Easter egg hunts and may get as far as conversion to Judaism or eventually abandon religion altogether. Although the process may be the only way the person has to progress, it can take many years of confusion and heartache possibly without ever reaching their elusive goal. In fact, they may be guilty of creating a very unrealistic goal of a faith or culture devoid of all "pagan" influence.

If we look deeply enough we may find "pagan" influence in everything we do simply because we humans have always interacted and change each other whether by imitating or rejecting what those around us do. Typical ways of handling "paganism" in Christianity is to flatly reject some practices not encompassed or suggested by Christian scriptures, while assimilating others, recreating them into Christian expressions. Christmas is a good example. We can see how the Winter Solstice celebrated by many ancient peoples once as the birthday of the sun was transformed and Christianized to recreate Jesus as the sun god whose birthday could continue to be celebrated in a slightly disguised manner. Meanwhile, some of the lewd behavior of the pagan celebration was officially rejected.

But the truth is that there has never been a real relationship between the historical person Yeshua and this venerable sun day. The same is true for most Christian holidays, as most honest people will admit. Unfortunately, the development of such holidays may have also come as a conscious effort to reject ties between earlier Jews (and their biblical holy days) and Christians. Many of us are aware of the Christian Emperor, Constantine, and his commandment to have nothing in common with Jews (*Eusebius, Vita Const., Lib. iii., 18-20).* The gentiles of the Christian religion felt more comfortable in making their ancient celebrations holy rather than choosing what God commanded. Perhaps this was a blessing in disguise for honest people to quickly see the departure of Christianity from biblical faith.

So what is the reason that Ebionites should avoid Christian holidays, including Christmas? Is it because we hate days off from work, holiday visitors and get-togethers, eating until we can't move, and jacking our credit card to the limit? Is it because they are of "Satan" and celebrating such is in effect a pact with the devil? (Satan is a character of Christian dualistic mythology, as real as the Easter bunny or the Great Pumpkin, Charlie Brown.) Does it hurt us to hack down a little tree, bring it indoors for a month or so, and hang poorly made electrical hazards around it and take a risk of burning down the house? And by not celebrating Christmas, aren't we sabotaging the economy which gambles so much on that holiday to make billions (for the Chinese?) and keep companies afloat through the rest of the year? Don't we need a break from work and school in the dreary winter of the Northern Hemisphere? Aren't we glad the sun is "coming back"? Don't we need an excuse to get drunk at the office party, finally get the nerve to make a move on a co-worker, and give policemen something to do as we swerve home? What's wrong with growing up on fairy tales, looking excitedly toward something, and then as we grow older turn to anti-depressants to stem our suicidal

tendencies because we can never recapture the magic of the holidays we had as children? Shouldn't we just forget God and His commandments, quit being such spoil sports, and join in on the "wonders" of Christmas? No!

Ebionites understand the Torah to be a commitment which we endeavor to keep faithfully. Regardless of arguments to divine or human origins of God's commandments, we believe that they present a way to live exceeding all others. Whether it is of human invention or not, we accept it as our religious constitution, freeing us from arbitrary rules, practices, or agendas devised by anyone else. For us, to accept another set of rules, doing things because of peer pressure, or just because we "feel like it," can lead to very grave sins such as rebellion against God, and idolatry.

The holy days of the God of Israel are clearly listed. Those are the only ones He sponsors, and all others are not His. Very simple, isn't it. But accepting things not given by God as godly is an indicator of very troubling attitudes toward God, making him more of a ventriloquist's dummy than King of the universe, world within world, worlds without end.

Now when we say that these other "holidays" are not of God, we are saying that they are not holy to Yahweh, the God of Israel and our covenant, and to claim that they are amounts to slandering God. Accordingly, Christmas, Easter, Sunday, and all the other Christian "holidays" as well as those of other religions are not holy at all, and cannot be just because some person or group of people decides they are. We also realize that religions not claiming to be based on the God of Israel's scriptures will hardly find this reasoning correct. But for those religions (such as Christianity) that claim to look to the scriptures of Israel, such "holidays" are easily revealed as unscriptural, and not of God. Claiming that these days are instituted by "Jesus" or by the authority of the Church as holy is false because neither the Church nor "Jesus" has the authority to bestow holiness. Incidentally, Yeshua never instituted such things.

A belief that a man or men have the power to act as God and create holy things is tantamount to idolatry, and it is the same thinking that creates polytheism as well as oppression and dictatorships. When a man is allowed to act as the representative of God, and others support this presumptive crime, he may institute whatever he pleases "on behalf" of God from fun and merrymaking to programs of hate, oppression, degradation, or even debauchery. No man is infallible. No church is infallible. It is as much an abomination for a pope, TV preacher, or rabbi to set himself up as godling as it was for Roman emperors who expected sacrifices to acknowledge their divine status.

The sin of Christmas is not because of paganism. The scriptures expect such from the gentiles. Christians are not part of the covenant relationship with the God of Israel and therefore are not obligated to act as though they are. Israel is commanded to reject the ways in which the gentile nations worship their gods, but the gentile nations just do what gentiles do and we shouldn't expect more. For thousands of years the gentiles have adored the heavenly bodies, particularly the sun and moon. And so their major times of worship come at solstices and equinoxes. Are we not unrealistic in expecting them to stop celebrating these times, under whatever names they perpetuate such worship? In spite of names like Christmas, Sunday, Easter, etc., these celestial "holidays" were already ancient when our God gave us His holy days at Sinai.

And these holidays are not "of Satan." They just belong to silly people who worship themselves, other men, and the creation instead of the Creator. That is not so much evil as it is tragically humorous; a parade of self-appointed, superstitious fools following pompous frauds, the ignorant under the King of Fools and lords of misrule as in an ancient forerunner of Christmas, Saturnalia.

In fact, there is a good side to this Christmas. Once a year the cold hearts of Christians (and other gentiles) are officially scolded and shamed into kindness toward others, the misfortunate are seen to, sacrifices are made to the homeless, and social guilt is relieved. Shouldn't we be positive about anything that changes them so? Perhaps it may encourage them to do justice to others all year around, as we are commanded in our Torah.

So our "beef" with Christmas (and other Christian holidays) should not be because we are shocked that gentiles behave in a pagan way, that pagan religion is pagan. Our disdain should be reserved for their dishonesty and their unholy treatment of God by claiming His approval of worship He never commanded, and in fact condemned for those who would worship Him alone. Let the Christians return to the real names and reasons for the alleged "Christmas" holiday (and others) and be honest. Call it Saturnalia, or even better, Solstice, and celebrate it as a purely secular holiday free of lies and excuses blaming the celebration on Jesus' birth or the God of Israel.

Mocking God, ignoring His words to authorize and embrace paganism is much worse than simple paganism.

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